



STRATEGIC
NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI
PROJECT

MAKING IT WORK

The Education and Employment of Recent Arts Graduates



ANNUAL REPORT
2014



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Mission

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) investigates the educational experiences and career paths of arts graduates nationally. SNAAP provides the findings to educators, policymakers, and philanthropic organizations to improve arts training, inform cultural policy, and support artists.



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ANNUAL REPORT **2014**

By **JENNIFER C. LENA**

With Sally Gaskill, Rebecca F. Houghton, Amber D. Lambert,
Angie L. Miller, and Steven J. Tepper

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SNAAP Fast Facts

The Arts

SNAAP defines “the arts,” “art,” and “artist” to include a broad range of creative activity, including performance, design, architecture, creative writing, music composition, choreography, film, illustration, and fine art.

Survey

SNAAP is a comprehensive survey administered online to the arts alumni of participating institutions. Completion time for the survey is generally 20 to 30 minutes. The results described in this report are based on data collected from the 2011, 2012, and 2013 annual survey administrations.

Partners

Founded in 2008, SNAAP is based at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and administered in cooperation with the Indiana University Center for Survey Research. From 2008

to 2014, SNAAP collaborated closely with the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University in research and development. Beginning in July 2014, we welcome the Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts at Arizona State University as our research partner. Launched with start-up support from the Surdna Foundation as well as other funders, SNAAP is now primarily self-supported by fees from participating institutions. Thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts for a research grant awarded in May 2014.

Participating Institutions

SNAAP collects and analyzes data from arts graduates from a wide variety of institutions including arts high schools, comprehensive colleges and universities, liberal arts colleges, and special-focus arts institutions. Since 2008, almost 300 institutions have participated in SNAAP. (See pages 26-28 for the list of all institutions that have participated in SNAAP.)

Table 1: SNAAP 2011, 2012, and 2013 Institutional Characteristics

CHARACTERISTICS	% OF INSTITUTIONS
<i>Region</i>	
Northeast	22%
South	27%
Midwest	29%
West	21%
<i>Sector</i>	
Private Nonprofit	43%
Public	57%
<i>Classification^a</i>	
Arts High Schools	9%
Special-Focus Postsecondary Institutions	19%
Baccalaureate Colleges	9%
Master’s Colleges & Universities	23%
Doctoral Universities	41%

^a Classification is based on Carnegie Classifications for all postsecondary institutions. Baccalaureate Colleges includes institutions classified as both Bac/A&S and Bac/Diverse. Master’s Colleges and Universities includes Master’s/L, Master’s/M, and Master’s/S. Doctoral Universities includes RU/VH, RU/H, and DRU.

Respondents and Response Rates

In 2011, 2012, and 2013, over 92,000 arts alumni participated in the SNAAP survey from 153 institutions—140 postsecondary institutions and 13 arts high schools.¹ The average institutional response rate for 2011, 2012, and 2013 combined is 18%. Table 2 provides selected respondent characteristics for those alumni that participated in SNAAP 2011, 2012, and 2013.

Calendar

The next administration of the SNAAP survey will take place in Fall 2015. Institutions can register to participate beginning in early 2015 and ending in July 2015.

Audiences

SNAAP provides valuable, actionable data to educators, institutional and public policymakers, researchers, philanthropic organizations, as well as arts graduates and current/future arts students and their families.

Cost

SNAAP is primarily a self-sustaining research project; therefore, institutional participation fees underwrite the cost of survey administration, data analysis, and reports.

Participating in SNAAP enables an institution to receive comparative data from peer institutions—and is far more cost-effective than doing a similar alumni survey on one's own. The cost to participate in the 2015 SNAAP survey will be announced in Fall–Winter 2014–15.

Participation Agreement

Institutions participating in SNAAP agree that SNAAP can use data collected through the survey administration in the aggregate for national reporting purposes. Results pertaining to a particular institution and identifying as such will never be made public by SNAAP except by mutual agreement between SNAAP and the participating institution.

Institutional Reports

Each participating institution receives a confidential, customized *Institutional Report* that presents and analyzes the responses of its alumni, as well as comparative data from other participating institutions. Schools can elect to compare their data to other institutions on a granular level, including nearly 80 arts majors.

¹ The data throughout this report do not include responses from an additional nine postsecondary institutions that participated in 2011, 2012, and/or 2013 (including two Canadian institutions), due to nonstandard survey administrations.

Table 2: SNAAP 2011, 2012, and 2013 Selected Respondent Characteristics

CHARACTERISTICS	% OF RESPONDENTS
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	40%
Female	60%
Transgender	<1%
<i>Cohort</i>	
1983 and before	26%
1984–1993	17%
1994–1998	10%
1999–2003	13%
2004–2008	18%
2009–2013	17%
<i>Recent Graduate^a</i>	
Yes	20%
No	80%
<i>First-Generation Student^b</i>	
Yes	35%
No	65%

^a We define “recent graduate” here and throughout this report as those individuals who graduated from an undergraduate or graduate program within five years of the date they completed the SNAAP survey.

^b First-generation students are those whose parents or guardians have not completed a four-year degree or higher.

From the Research Director

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project continues to amass one of the largest arts-related data sets ever collected in the US, with nearly 100,000 alumni participating over the past three years. This year's report investigates the experiences of our most recent graduates: those who completed the survey within five years of completing their education.

We are grateful that our colleague Jennifer Lena from Columbia University Teachers College, a long-time research collaborator with SNAAP, lent her expertise and insight to this analysis.

For those of us running arts training institutions, what do these results tell us about where we need to focus our attention and how we can serve our students and graduates better as they transition from school to work?

The SNAAP survey data reveal, first, that recent graduates, compared to older cohorts, are more likely to report having learned “soft skills”—persuasion, networking, project management, and working with the community—at their institutions. Given the diverse pathways our graduates will take, the frequency of self-employment and entrepreneurialism, and the deployment of artistic skills across social and occupational contexts, we must continue to expose our students to these broad competencies. Substantial minorities of graduates still report that they did not receive adequate training in project management, persuasive speaking, or building networks. Even fewer (only a quarter or less) report that their institutions helped them to acquire or develop financial and business management skills. We must aspire to raise these numbers to rates similar to those for our teaching of artistic technique. We must be equally committed to training our students in how to make art as well as how to make it as an artist, or how to deploy their artistic skills in any field they pursue.

Second, the findings in this report demonstrate what many of us know first hand—that more of our students are participating in internships. While this analysis only scratches the surface of how internships shape

education and careers in the arts, it reminds us that we must be fully attentive to this increasingly common employment arrangement. Many studies have shown that internships, if not structured properly with clear roles and responsibilities, can leave students and graduates feeling undervalued and disconnected from any meaningful learning objective. The rising intern economy is a reality facing our graduates. We should work collectively to ensure that internships are a bridge for our graduates—and not a brick wall.

Third, consistent with national trends, our results show an escalation of student debt. Overall, debt levels for arts students have increased substantially among recent graduates, both in terms of the percentage of those with any debt as well as in the amount of debt incurred. Strikingly, 35% of all recent graduates said that debt levels had a “major” impact on their educational and career decisions, compared to only 14% of non-recent grads. National reports have shown that many arts schools are among the most expensive in higher education when you examine total tuition and fees against average aid and scholarship packages. Clearly, we need to provide more scholarships to our students, but we also need to consider our costs. With our teaching-intensive curricula, low student-teacher ratios, and the added costs of materials and equipment, arts schools will always suffer from Baumol and Bowen's (1966) famous “cost disease”—increasing costs without higher efficiencies and productivity. Still, it is worth thinking about what a 21st century pedagogy and curriculum might look like—providing more possibilities for lower-cost training.

Finally, this report shows that recent graduates from arts training institutions are socially engaged—as teachers, volunteers, and patrons of the arts. Many of them tell us about how they are deploying their artistic talents to tackle social problems or serve their communities. Across the US, the rising generation of arts graduates is more likely to volunteer, more committed to social change, and more tolerant and open than previous generations. Our graduates want their artistic work and ideas to matter in the world. We need to continue shaping our institutions to match our

training with the ideals and aspirations of our socially engaged students.

We have much more to discover about our recent arts alumni. Many of our findings are necessarily speculative, as we do not have long-term, longitudinal data. Recent graduates may well age into experiences that are similar to those of older cohorts. Or, they may show they are distinctive in important ways. Regardless, the data presented in this report should jump-start important conversations about how well we support the transition from school to work and whether there is more we can do to prepare our graduates for success.

Steven J. Tepper

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Findings

Based on the results of the 2011, 2012, and 2013 surveys of the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project

1. Introduction

Over the last three years, the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) has surveyed over 92,000 arts graduates from over 150 institutions. SNAAP's first three annual reports focused on dispelling myths about arts alumni, demonstrating that these graduates have found meaningful employment, are satisfied with their lives, and are pleased that they chose to go to an arts school. These reports also revealed the ways in which arts alumni feel their institutions could have improved their educational experiences—for instance, by offering entrepreneurial and financial training, and by expanding their career-related services. Last year's report demonstrated that arts schools afford some unique advantages for women, minorities, and students from lower socioeconomic status groups, even while significant gaps and inequalities persist in enrollment, debt, and earnings.

SNAAP's 2014 Annual Report focuses on the experiences and prospects of recent arts graduates, combining responses from the 2011, 2012, and 2013 SNAAP surveys. Each fall and spring, matriculating and graduating students in the arts and humanities face a withering assault of criticism about the value of their training. Liberal arts graduates—and arts graduates in particular—are told, often on shaky evidence, that they face a perilous future—that their training has left them without many marketable skills as they enter a tight, post-recession labor market.

For example, in June 2014, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York released a report (drawing on the 2012 American Community Survey) in which the authors argued that liberal arts graduates have made a poor investment in their futures, at least compared to majors in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and business disciplines (Abel & Deitz, 2014). A new survey of job seekers and human resource professionals from the consulting firm Millennial Branding and the career network Beyond.com (Schawbel, 2014) found that only 2% of employers



actively recruit liberal arts majors. In contrast, 18% of employers seek out business majors, and 27% recruit engineers and computer scientists. Indeed, 49% of job seekers said “no jobs” exist for those with a liberal arts degree.

On the day they started college, the 2017 class at the University of Toronto could read the following lines in the local newspaper:

Many young men and women headed back to the postsecondary classroom this month, equipped with texts on cultural relativism and stars in their eyes. They should enjoy it while it lasts. Those stars will turn to dollar signs not long after graduation day, when the realization sets in that that medieval feminist studies degree they spent the last four years earning is not as marketable as they had anticipated (Urback, 2013).

The author closes with this advice: Before matriculating students declare a major, they should consider employment and wage data for the various fields of study. After these students estimate how long it will take them to pay back a student loan, the rational ones among them won't choose to pursue an arts degree.

Despite these alarming reports, there are also positive signs for recent graduates, including those in the arts. According to a report recently released by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), job prospects for new graduates are both good and improving. NACE's 2014 survey of nearly 44,000 students, representing 696 institutions, found that the percentage of seniors who received at least one job offer by their graduation day increased from 46% in 2013 to 48% in 2014. The greatest gains

were felt by majors in the visual and performing arts, who experienced a 15%-point improvement over the previous year. These results confirmed an earlier report published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2014), in collaboration with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, which found that unemployment rates among liberal arts graduates are low and decline over time, many of these majors pursue advanced degrees and receive an earnings bump when they do. At their age of peak earning (56–60) undergrad liberal arts majors often out-earn those who chose professional or pre-professional majors.

Furthermore, new research by Abel and Dietz (2014) suggests that across all disciplines the benefits of both a bachelor's and an associate's degree still outweigh the costs, even for the chronically underemployed. Yet all degrees, as these researchers demonstrate, are not equal. Unsurprisingly, disciplines providing technical



training, such as engineering, math, and computer science, and fields currently undergoing growth, such as health care, offer the highest returns. While the return on investment in a college education remains lower for liberal arts majors than for majors in the hard and soft sciences, it is above those for majors in leisure and hospitality, agriculture, and education—and liberal arts majors maintain a 12% higher average income over high school graduates. However, measuring the value of a degree only in terms of financial returns disregards much

of what graduates tell us about their experiences and aspirations (Lindemann, Tepper, et al., 2012; Lindemann & Tepper, 2014).

With the 2014 SNAAP Annual Report, we enter this debate armed with data from the Fall 2011, 2012, and 2013 surveys, which garnered the responses of more than 88,000 undergraduate and graduate alumni—among whom 17,022 (nearly 20%) were “recent alumni.” (We do not include data from arts high school respondents in this report.) We focus on the satisfaction and value of recent graduates’ education and on their experiences after graduation as they enter the workforce. We also compare the experiences and outcomes for recent and non-recent graduates.

Throughout this report, “recent alumni” are SNAAP survey respondents who graduated from an undergraduate or graduate program within five years of the date they completed the survey. “Non-recent,” “older cohorts,” “less-recent,” and “prior” alumni all refer to SNAAP respondents who completed the survey more than five years after their graduation.

SNAAP data—both qualitative and quantitative—provide in-depth as well as broad information about graduates from independent arts colleges and arts schools, departments, and programs in comprehensive colleges and universities. If we seek to educate students about the value of training in the arts, we must carefully investigate multiple aspects of that training—what skills are taught, how those skills are employed in work and in communities, and how students evaluate both the instrumental and emotional value of an arts education.

2. Experience in Arts School

What is it like to be a recent graduate from an arts program? Are these individuals weighed down by massive student loan debt and the prospect of long periods of unemployment or underemployment? What do they feel they learned in school, and how will they use those experiences as they move into the workforce?

In this section, we explore the experiences of recent alumni of undergraduate and graduate programs in the arts. Recent graduates provide the freshest and, perhaps, most valuable information on how current curricula, training, and administrative programming serve student populations.

Disciplinary Concentrations

While SNAAP respondents do not represent the full population of all arts graduates, the current database of over 92,000 arts alumni from institutions located in 40 states and the District of Columbia is a fairly large sample of those individuals with arts degrees from American institutions.

These SNAAP data show that recent graduates in our sample, like their older counterparts, specialize in a wide range of arts majors. The five most common majors for recent alumni at the undergraduate level include fine and studio arts (including photography), design, media arts, theater, and music performance. Recent alumni with advanced degrees also reported a range of disciplinary majors, including fine arts, design, dance, music performance, theater, and architecture (Table 3). It is important to keep this variety in mind when interpreting educational and career experiences in the findings ahead.

Skills Differentials

Do recent graduates receive different training than older cohorts? Are they learning different skills? Is there evidence that changes in arts curricula have impacted students?

We asked recent arts graduates a series of questions about the degree to which their undergraduate or graduate training institution had helped them acquire or develop a range of skills—if they had been taught critical thinking skills, creative thinking, and problem solving; if they had learned how to analyze arguments and information, to write clearly, and to speak persuasively; if they had received a broad education. We also asked if they felt they had learned artistic technique or how to improve their work based on feedback from others. Did they learn project management, technological skills, and research skills? Did they learn how to develop interpersonal relationships and to network? Did their school prepare them to engage in financial and business management, to be leaders, or to teach?

Table 3: Distribution of Recent Alumni^a Majors, by Level^b and Cohort^c

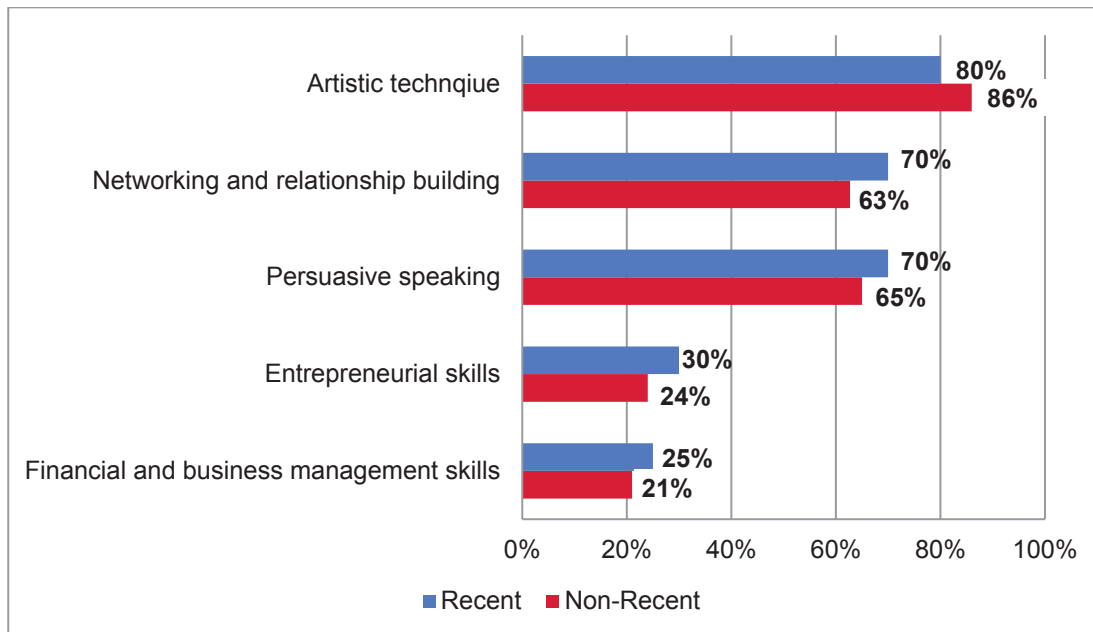
MAJORS	UNDERGRADUATE		GRADUATE	
	<i>Non-Recent</i>	<i>Recent</i>	<i>Non-Recent</i>	<i>Recent</i>
Architecture	7%	6%	8%	10%
Art History	3%	5%	4%	5%
Arts Administration	1%	1%	1%	3%
Arts Education (Art, Music, Dance, Drama)	9%	6%	10%	7%
Creative and Other Writing	1%	3%	3%	6%
Dance	2%	2%	2%	1%
Design	15%	15%	4%	7%
Fine and Studio Arts (Including Photography)	32%	27%	24%	20%
Media Arts	11%	15%	7%	9%
Music History, Composition, and Theory	1%	1%	5%	3%
Music Performance	9%	8%	22%	20%
Theater	9%	9%	10%	6%
Other Arts	1%	2%	2%	2%

^a Throughout this report, “recent” refers to alumni who completed the SNAAP survey no more than five years following graduation; “non-recent” refers to all cohorts who graduated more than five years before taking the survey.

^b Throughout this report, “level” refers to “undergraduate” or “graduate” classification.

^c Throughout this report, “cohort” refers to “recent” or “non-recent” classification.

Figure 1: How Much^a Institutions Help Graduate-Level Alumni Acquire the Following Skills, by Cohort



^a Combines responses of those who reported that their institution helped them acquire skills “some” or “very much.”

The responses of all arts alumni—both recent and less-recent graduates—suggest that arts schools are extremely effective at teaching artistic technique and encouraging creativity. Overall, 90% of SNAAP respondents said their institutions helped them “some” or “very much” (vs. “not at all” or “very little”) to acquire or develop artistic technique. While there are no differences in responses to this survey item between recent and non-recent undergraduate alumni, recent graduate level alumni were less likely to say their institution helped them “very much” to acquire artistic skills, compared to older cohorts (46% vs. 55%). Perhaps the value of training in artistic technique only becomes apparent to the individual over time, or perhaps shifts in graduate curricula (e.g., more emphasis on theory and concept and less on specific disciplinary techniques) have compromised the perceived quality of training.

Are there other differences between recent and less-recent alumni?

- In the case of project management skills, recent and non-recent graduates have different impressions of their undergraduate experiences. More than half of both recent and non-recent undergraduate alumni reported that they received at least “some” project management training. However, a larger percentage of recent

undergrad alumni (41%) said their institutions helped them with project management “very much,” compared to only 27% of older grads. This may reflect the increase in project-based learning in arts schools and throughout the academy.

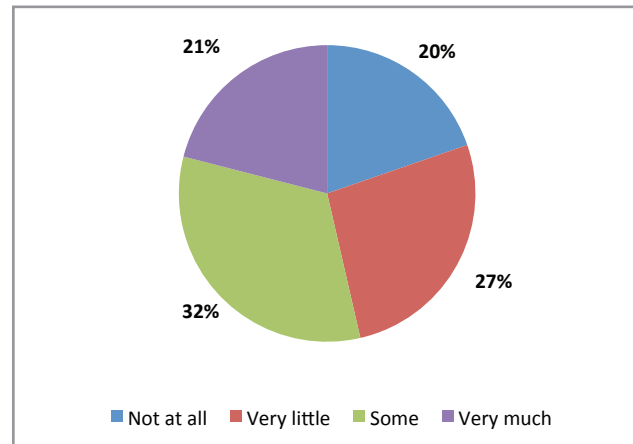
- Recent graduate-level alumni gave slightly more positive evaluations (compared to alumni who graduated more than five years ago) of the training their institutions provided them in persuasive speaking (5% difference), financial and business management skills (4% difference), entrepreneurial skills (6% difference), networking and relationship building (7% difference)—and they were slightly less positive (than prior graduate-level alumni) when it came to evaluating their training in artistic technique (6% difference). This suggests that training programs may have begun providing more “soft skills” that arts leaders and entrepreneurs might need (Figure 1).
- While their evaluations of arts institutions were generally high, SNAAP respondents gave lower marks for training in finance and entrepreneurship than for any other skill set. Only 25% of recent graduates and 21% of non-recent graduates indicated that their institutions

helped them “some” or “very much” to acquire or develop financial and business management skills, and only 30% of recent alumni and 24% of non-recent alumni said the same about entrepreneurial skills.

Within these broad patterns, some particular trends are worth noting:

- At least half of both graduate and undergraduate alumni (both recent and less so) reported their training had helped them “very much” to acquire a range of skills and abilities including critical thinking, improving work based on feedback, and creative thinking and problem solving.
- Undergraduate curricula appear to excel at providing a broad knowledge base, with nearly half (49%) of all alumni at this level giving the highest possible rating to their institutions. Given that many alumni were arts majors in a liberal arts context, this suggests that schools are fulfilling their mandate to provide a general education.
- Graduate programs are particularly successful at providing training in artistic technique, with more than half of recent and less-recent alumni giving their alma mater the highest possible rating. This result is what we might expect given that graduate training is often highly discipline specific.
- The most mixed evaluations were found in undergraduate alumni responses to a question concerning their institution’s training in teaching skills. Among both recent and less-recent graduates, about a quarter of the respondents chose each response category—“not at all,” “very little,” “some,” and “very much” (Figure 2). This may be because the majority of SNAAP respondents majored in discipline-specific areas in which the curriculum does not include formal teacher training. Since so many arts graduates include teaching in their work portfolio later in life, institutions might consider adding workshops or other programs that address teaching skills.

Figure 2: The Extent to Which Institutions Helped Undergraduate Alumni Acquire Teaching Skills



Recent alumni were eager to tell us more about the training they received in school. Excerpts from these comments cannot illuminate the breadth and depth of these testimonials, but they might give a sense of their focus and character. One alum described how the skills she gained in school impacted her volunteer and work activity:

I am engaged in sharing creative work with others, particularly in education settings. I seek out working with community-minded organizations that value collaboration and creativity, particularly nonprofits. I am aware of appropriate materials and costs for different projects and understand how to work collaboratively with others on project-based initiatives. I often take initiative myself to learn from new experiences and look at things experimentally, which I believe came from my education.

The range of skills this respondent acquired in school is quite astonishing, but she is not alone. A number of alumni pointed out the value of a cluster of “soft” and technical skills they learned as students. Consider this response from a recent alum: “[My training] has given me skills to think on my feet, when I’m in a bind. Problem solving, verbal communication, social skills, talking about work, having a discussion, technical skills of many sorts.” Numerous SNAAP respondents documented the ways in which the artistic, management, and interpersonal skills they learned as students had a positive impact on their work and professional lives.

Some alumni focused on the value of discipline-specific skills, like this architecture major:

I am a resourceful person who is able to think and approach topics on multiple levels to find the correct solution where one is welcome. Being an architecture student has helped me develop my own mind, opinion and knowledge of what it means to be a critical, positive addition to a creative community as a leader and co-leader.

Another had a similar comment to share:

My arts education has affected my civic and community life in a plethora of ways. I am very capable at planning and managing community events. I am an effective public speaker at such events. I am a leader and have confidence leading others. I speak multiple languages that allow me to be effective in multiple communities. The arts training I received has so fully permeated my whole person that it effects everything I do.

Clear evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, suggests that training in the arts is preparing recent alumni to be committed and able community members and professionals.

Internships

Internships are offered by employers in almost every sector of the economy (National Association of Colleges & Employers, 2011; Perlin, 2011), and internships are particularly prevalent in arts and culture work. Miège (1989) describes these fields as characterized by a “reservoir of workers ready to work without the need to pay them wages” (p. 30), perhaps because internships are cast as beneficial to both employers and workers. Employers have a chance to train and evaluate potential employees at low or no cost to them, and interns gain experience, references, social and human capital, and possibly course credit while also evaluating their fit with a potential future employer (Coco, 2000; Swail & Kampits, 2004). Yet critics argue that internships are largely unregulated, are of varying quality and usefulness to students (and employers), and are arguably a means by which young, overqualified workers are exploited (Frenette, 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Perlin, 2011).

In the SNAAP survey, recent alumni of undergraduate programs were more likely than less-recent alumni to report having taken an internship during their degree program. Fifty-four percent of recent graduates of undergraduate programs reported having completed at least one internship, compared to 32% of less-recent graduates. The same pattern holds among alumni of graduate programs: 30% of recent alumni of graduate programs reported having completed an internship during school, while only 24% of less-recent alumni reported the same. Looking more closely at trends across cohorts, only two of every ten undergraduate arts students who graduated in 1983 or earlier had an internship during their program. In contrast, this proportion more than doubles for undergraduates who completed their degrees between 2009 and 2013, with over five of every ten of these alumni participating in an internship. The rise in popularity of internships at the graduate level was slower, rising from 19% of graduates in 1983 and earlier to 30% of those graduating between 2009 and 2013.

What do these internships offer students in arts programs? Responding to the SNAAP survey, one recent graduate highlighted the skills she had acquired across a series of internships:

I have completed two government internships and one political campaign internship (all unpaid) throughout my time in school. I do believe that my education in writing for film and television supported the work I did in these internships. The focus these internships took was on writing, messaging, and some digital (film) work. [My institution] taught me technical skills which I’ve used in them and the skills I learned in my writing classes translated surprisingly well in political/government writing, specifically the skill of quickly adopting another voice, as well as general structure for excellent written and verbal communication.

Other recent graduates discussed how their internships in the arts parlayed into their life’s work in the arts: “All of my art training at my institution prepared me for my career starting from an intern up to my current position as a creative director. So my art training is extremely relevant.” Another alum noted that “all of my internships [during school] turned into jobs for

me.” Another graduate with a performing arts major found internships were the key to success:

The things I learned in the internships I took part in as part of my study play a major part in my current work. I work in a theater where I need to know information about backstage—from tools to design—as well as information about budgeting.

The increasing use of internships and the generally positive comments about them on the SNAAP survey should be weighed against research and news accounts suggesting that the intern economy can be perilous for many creative graduates—especially when boundaries and roles are not well defined, when educational objectives are overshadowed by low-level tasks, and when companies use the free labor of interns to cut costs. Training organizations should pay close attention to the quality of internships and work hard to keep educational objectives at the center of the experience.

3. Transitions

Do arts graduates find employment after graduation? Does their training translate into jobs? How prepared are they for further education? Are recent graduates less

likely to pursue additional education than older cohorts? In this section, we use SNAAP data to explore the transition of arts alumni to work, including the impact of debt on their life choices, their perceptions of preparedness for further education, the time it takes them to get their first job, and how well their early-career employment fits their training and interests.

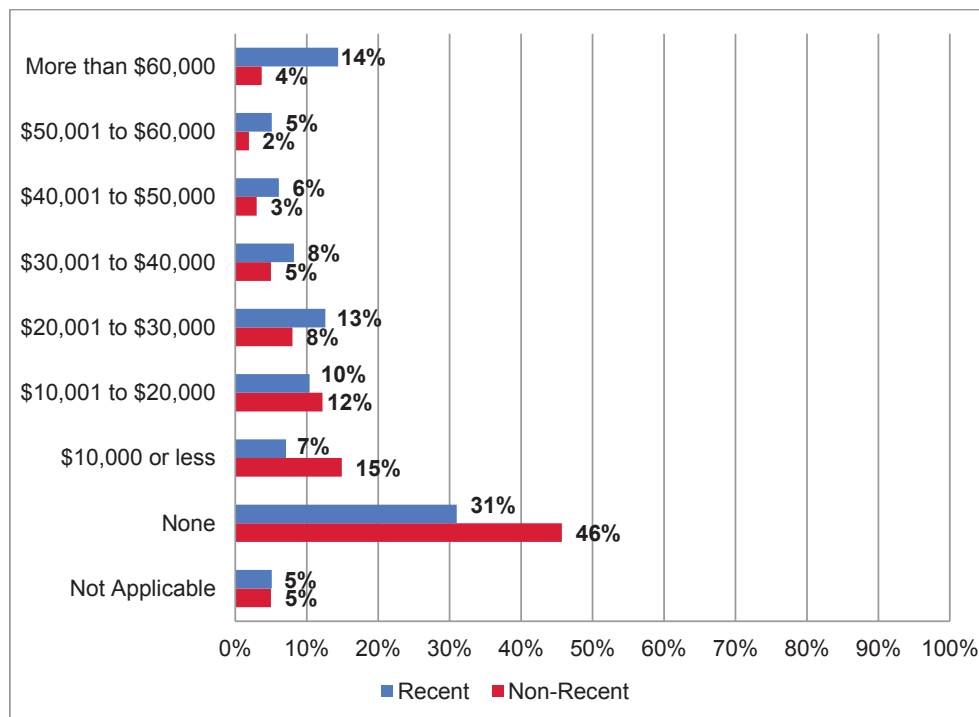
The Effect of Debt

Skyrocketing higher education costs have plagued recent graduates with massive student loan debt. How much debt do arts graduates carry, and how does this impact their educational and career decisions? In this section, we explore the impact of debt on SNAAP respondents.

SNAAP data show that arts students are not immune to rising student loan debt. Debt-carrying rates among arts students are notably higher among recent graduates for all but the lowest amounts of debt. Less than a third of recent alums reported graduating with no debt, while nearly half of their prior-graduate counterparts reported having done so (Figure 3).

At the extreme end, the percentage of recent arts alumni finishing school with more than \$60,000 of debt (14%) is more than triple that of non-recent graduates. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that more

Figure 3: Student Loan Debt, by Cohort



* "Not applicable" signifies that alumni did not have any costs associated with their education or preferred not to answer the question.

than half (58%) of recent graduates report that the amount of debt they incurred has had at least some impact on their career or educational decisions, compared to less than a third (32%) of non-recent graduates. Strikingly, 35% of recent graduates said that debt levels had a “major” impact on their educational and career decisions, compared to only 14% of non-recent grads.

Preparedness and the Pursuit of Further Education

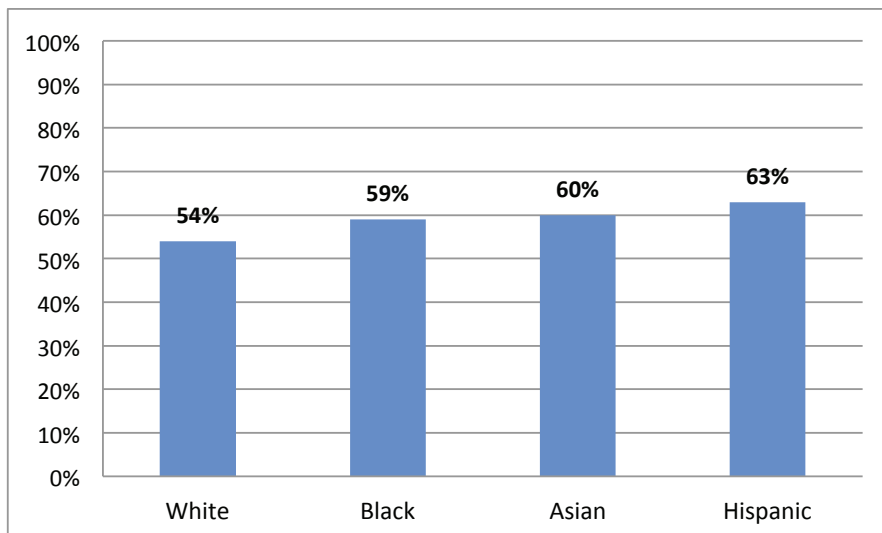
How prepared are recent arts graduates for further education? We asked arts graduates about how well they feel their degrees prepared them for further education. Some interesting patterns emerged from their answers:

- A smaller percentage of recent grads pursued further education, compared to less-recent grads. Only 56% of recent graduates reported pursuing additional degrees, compared to 64% of less-recent graduates. While this might be related to rising debt levels, it could also be explained by the time since graduation. Only one to five years after graduation, recent grads may still be planning to pursue further education at some point in the future. They may be taking time away from education to establish themselves in the workforce, pay down student loan debt, explore interests in a variety of areas, or a combination of these and other reasons.

- The responses of both recent and less-recent graduates suggest that arts alumni generally feel well prepared for further education. Of those who pursued further education, 84% of recent graduates and 86% of less-recent graduates said they felt “very well” or “fairly well” prepared for further education.

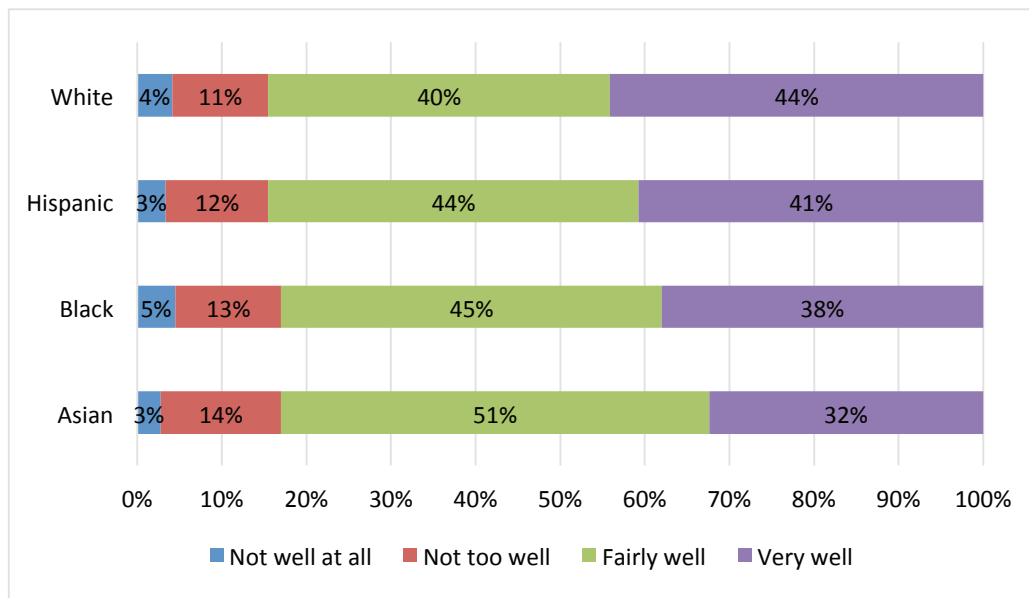
While all arts alumni who pursued advanced degrees reported feeling generally prepared for further education, there was a notable difference between recent and prior graduates in the percentage who felt “very well prepared”—42% of recent grads, compared to 51% of prior graduates. Among recent graduates, there was little difference between men and women in their likelihood to pursue further education or the extent to which they felt prepared to do so. We found slight variation, however, among arts graduates based on racial or ethnic identities. A higher percentage of alumni of Asian, African American, and Hispanic descent pursued further education, compared to their White counterparts. Those of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish descent were slightly more apt to continue their studies (63% see Figure 4), and 85% (Figure 5) of those pursuing further education reported they were “very” or “fairly well” prepared to do so. This result—coupled with the finding that similar levels of preparedness for further education were reported across all four of these racial/ethnic categories—is encouraging for institutions that are cognizant of social inequalities

Figure 4: Recent Alumni Who Pursued Further Education, by Race and Ethnicity^a



^a Figure excludes American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, “Other” race/ethnicity, and respondents who selected more than one racial/ethnic category due to low numbers of respondents.

Figure 5: Recent Alumni^a Preparedness to Pursue Further Education, by Race and Ethnicity^b



^a Figure includes only those alumni who responded that they pursued further education. ^b Figure excludes American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, “Other” race/ethnicity, and respondents who selected more than one racial/ethnic category due to low numbers of respondents.

and are taking steps to provide a high-quality education for all students.

4. The Working World

What does SNAAP data tell us about the work lives of recent arts graduates? In this section, we examine arts graduates’ experiences in finding employment, staying in the arts versus moving to other fields, and overall job satisfaction. We also explore the role of geography by considering how many recent grads stay in the locales in which they attended school. Finally, we investigate how engaged recent alumni are with their communities.

Relevance of Current Work to Arts Training

Of the recent grads who have found employment, 80% say their first job was “closely” or “somewhat closely” related to their field of training, compared to 82% of less-recent grads. Even among those working in jobs not directly related to their field of study, arts alumni reported that their training was still relevant, having taught them skills and ways of thinking that were widely applicable.

In response to questions about graduates’ current job (not just their first job), the percentages start to shrink

but are still quite high. Among SNAAP respondents employed at the time they completed the survey, 64% of recent grads and 69% of prior graduates were in jobs they described as either “very relevant” or “relevant” to their educational training. These graduates compare favorably to graduates from other fields. The National Science Foundation’s *Survey of Recent College Graduates* (2010) reveals that 53% of mechanical engineers, 56% of accounting majors, 58% of biology majors, and 53% of journalism majors work in jobs closely related to their fields of study. In terms of the link between their training and their employment, SNAAP alumni are doing just as well as (or better than) their peers in other disciplines.

While the findings above are generally positive, they do not negate the struggles many alumni face. One alum writes, “I still live in a ghetto. I can’t afford new clothes. I work at a job I needed no art training at. Somehow I still get published. There is no money right out of college for artists unless joining a design firm.” Another reflects, “I have a bunch of art knowledge that’s fun at parties, but has yet to put any food on the table. An arts degree is grotesquely unpractical.”

Such experiences may not represent the majority of arts alumni, but stories like these help fuel the

dominant discourse about the impracticality and unprofitability of arts majors. Schools need to help these graduates find the right employment fit, and they need to provide students with stronger narratives about how the broad skill set they acquire in college can be leveraged—whether working as artists or in other fields.

Stories like these also remind us that more needs to be done to investigate the determinants of success in the transition to work of arts alumni. What do SNAAP respondents have to say in this regard?

Factors Needed to Stay in the Arts

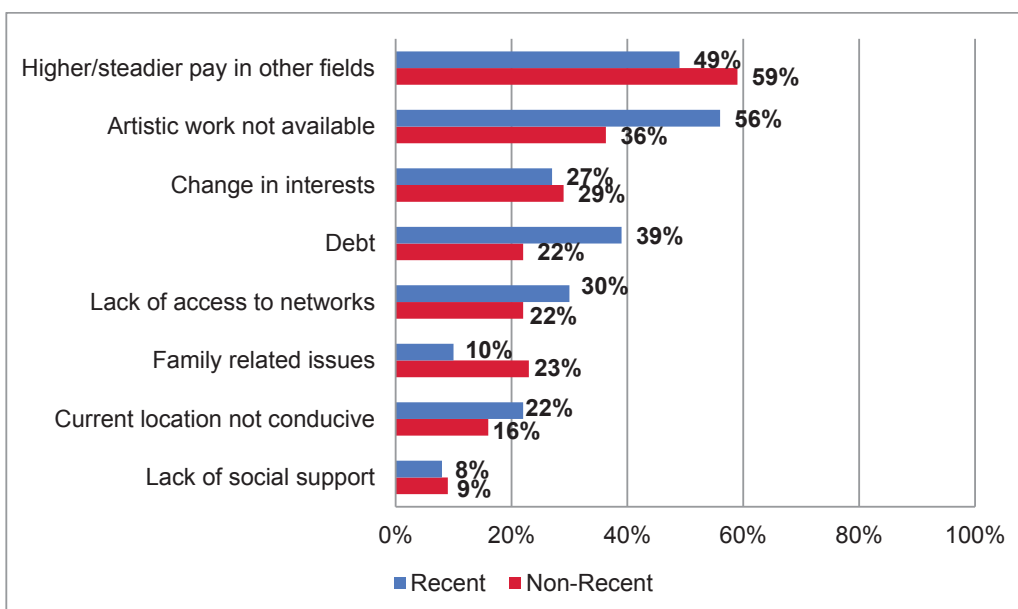
Many alumni, both recent and non-recent, reported that services such as career counseling, active alumni networks, and professional training programs would have been beneficial to their careers, but were not provided by their educational institution. A large number of alumni reported a desire for help finding exhibiting and performance opportunities and other resources for presenting work.

Of course, institutional resources are not the only factors influencing outcomes. In response to an open-ended question, arts alumni commented on additional resources they felt were important to their success. In addition to personal initiative, motivation, and persistence (and/or luck), those who responded often

cited social support—partners, families, and mentors, as well as communities—as key influences on their success. Many also cited affordable rent (for living and for studio space) as well as affordable healthcare and childcare as essential to their success in artistic careers. While these responses highlight the forces beyond educational institutions that help structure positive outcomes for arts alumni, schools may be able to play a role in coordinating or enhancing these extra-institutional experiences and resources.

Turning next to recent graduates who aspired to be professional artists but who are not currently working as such, we ask what explains this course change? The most common reason recent graduates gave for this was their inability to find work as an artist (56%) (Figure 6). A close second was the allure of a higher-paying job or a steadier income in another field (49%). Less-recent alumni reported the same reasons but in reverse proportions—59% pursued a different job because of higher pay and steadier income while 36% said artistic work was simply not available. The biggest differences between recent and less-recent alumni for not working as a professional artist had to do with family obligations and debt. Less-recent alumni, understandably, were much more likely to cite family-related issues (23%, compared to 10% for recent alums); recent alums were much more likely

Figure 6: Reasons for Not Working as Professional Artists, by Cohort



^a Includes those who are past professional artists, or those who never have been professional artists but intended to be.

to cite debt (39% vs. 22% for non-recent alums). This last comparison calls attention to the escalating costs of college and the untenable levels of debt for recent graduates.

Job Satisfaction

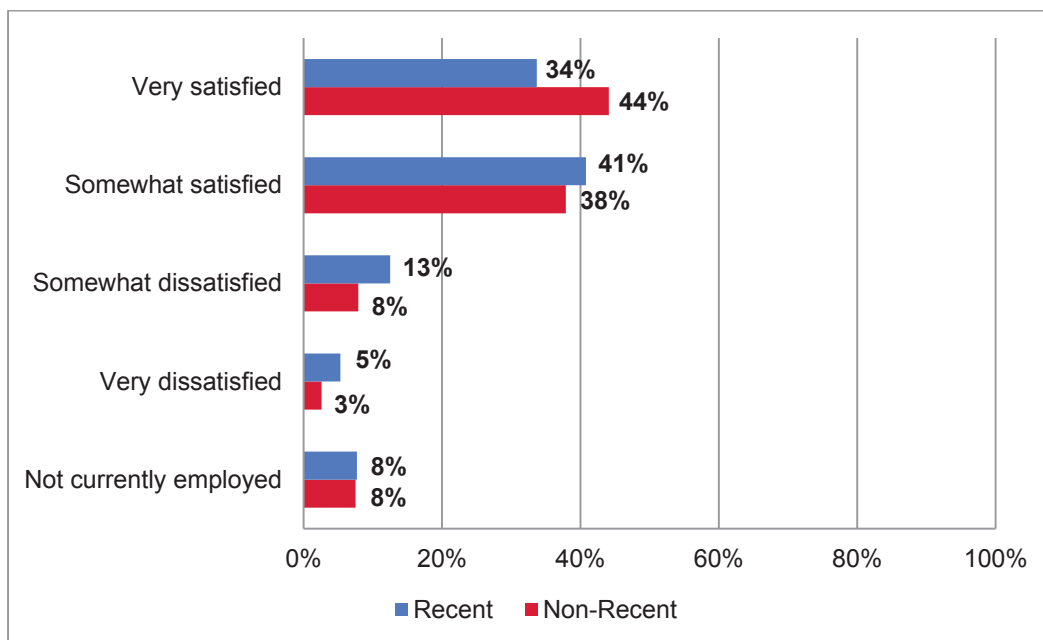
Artists are among the happiest professionals, according to several national and international surveys—reportedly happier than lawyers, financial managers, and high school teachers (Lindemann & Tepper, 2014; Steiner & Schneider, 2013). We asked SNAAP alumni to rate their job satisfaction along several dimensions including income, job security, and the opportunity for creative expression.

Overall satisfaction with the job in which they were spending the majority of their time, among both recent and prior graduates, was very high (75% and 82%, respectively) (Figure 7). While the difference between these percentages may be attributed to real differences in working conditions, it may also be that recent graduates enter the job market with higher expectations and are subsequently disappointed, compared to prior graduates who are more experienced and who, over time, find the right employment fit. In fact, other studies have consistently shown that job satisfaction in most fields increases with age (Clark, Oswald, & Warr, 1996; Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983).

Other specific findings include

- Among recent graduates, 69% reported being satisfied with their job security, while that proportion was slightly higher, at nearly three fourths (74%), among prior graduates. A general increase in the percentage of contingent workers could help explain this downward trend (Autor & Houseman 2010; Belous, 1995; Hollister 2011), as well as the fact that job security increases with professional advancement.
- There were also differences in satisfaction regarding opportunities to be creative at work. Recent grads reported lower levels of satisfaction (67%), compared to prior grads (79%), and the percentage of recent graduates reporting they were “very dissatisfied” with the level of creativity in their jobs was more than double that of prior grads (10% vs. 4%).
- In contrast to the traditional archetype of the “starving artist,” the majority of currently employed SNAAP alumni indicated they were satisfied with their income, although a smaller percentage of recent graduates (52%) reported being satisfied than non-recent grads (63%). In addition, the percentage of recent alumni

Figure 7: Overall Job Satisfaction, by Cohort



reporting they were “very dissatisfied” was low (16%).

- Only 28% of recent graduates reported that they were “very” satisfied with their work/life balance, compared to 33% of less-recent graduates. Perhaps advances in technology have helped to blur the traditional line between work and home, making the maintenance of boundaries between the two more difficult. Or it could be that achieving this balance is a skill that is learned over time, and less-recent graduates simply have had more time to perfect it.
- Fewer recent graduates (66%) were satisfied with the opportunities they had to contribute to “the greater good” at work, compared to less-recent grads (77%).
- The majority of arts alumni reported being satisfied with the extent to which their work reflected their personality, interests and values, although a lower percentage of recent graduates (70%) said they were satisfied, compared to non-recent graduates (80%).

Overall, SNAAP respondents told us that their job satisfaction was relatively high. Recent graduates, however, reported being less satisfied across all measures of job satisfaction, compared to prior grads. This difference may be related to the fact that a slightly lower percentage of recent grads were able to find work in arts-related fields (65% vs. 68% for prior grads). On the other hand, it may reflect the effects of age or cohort. Recent grads, who are on the whole younger and less experienced, may have different expectations for the structure and content of their working lives. Over time, we may be able to sort out whether these new graduates, with age, become as satisfied as their older counterparts—or whether there is something distinctive about this cohort and their experiences.

Geography

Where do recent SNAAP alumni move when they graduate? Do they move to so-called “cultural hubs”—like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York—where the labor market for the arts is large

and competitive? Do they move to smaller “creative cities” where the labor market is less saturated with qualified workers, rents are lower, and the quality of life can be quite high? Or do recent graduates stay in their college town, building on contacts and resources they developed during their years in school? Retaining graduates in the local workforce might be a result of policies that universities create with their local government leaders, and students may find it easier to secure a job when the interviews are held locally.

SNAAP respondents were asked if they remained in the town or city where their educational institution was located within the first five years after they graduated. Among recent alumni, 40% chose to remain in the same city or town where their college or university is located. A quick comparison with non-recent graduates shows this trend is not recent. Among those who graduated less recently, 36% chose to remain where they were educated.

Why do arts alumni choose to stay in the city where they got their degree? One alum wrote that school “opened my eyes to the working artists in this city and to the high caliber work that is being done here. It made me want to join the community of artists in this city.” Others discussed vibrant social links to students, alums, and faculty that live in the area—links that were established while they were in school. One SNAAP respondent explained that “continuing friendships with faculty members have certainly led to my increased participation in the literary life of the community.” Another wrote, “Having attended a local university, I find myself having a lot of rapport with the community, because of my involvement in the arts program. It has helped me build relationships with members of the community over the years.” Another took advantage of college programming: “I am still attending the events put on by the program I graduated from.”

Whether or not they stayed in the city where they got their degree, those who lived in smaller communities, or “second cities,” often found themselves frustrated with the work available and the lack of vibrancy in the local arts scene. For example, one 2013 graduate bemoaned,

There is no arts “community” in my town. There is no promotion of the arts. It is always about “local,” which doesn’t mean quality. Usually it is the same people from the region who participate in shows. They are the only people who can get a show here because they are the people who are promoted. It’s a select group of individuals. And none of it includes young artists.

In contrast, others found that smaller arts labor markets, and specialized training, provided them opportunities to work, like this recent alum:

My artistic training is very specified and largely a rarity in my area. I have specified training which allows me to gain particular work here, but the area in which I live has few resources and artistic programs. The community itself is small and confining.

Other residents of small towns celebrated their inclusion in the community: “Our small town hugely advocates for the arts. Because our dance school is recognized in the community, different community organizations have sought me out to help with a local youth performing group, the public school performances, etc.”

Whether their graduates move to a cultural capital, a second-tier city, or stay in the community where they went to school, schools need to think carefully about what support is necessary to help them develop the connections and portfolio of projects necessary to advance their careers.

Community Engagement

A great deal of ink has been spilled on the contributions arts graduates and artists make to the communities in which they live. Through their labor and nonpecuniary contributions, creative workers have become associated with rising land and rent values, falling vacancy rates, higher (business, sales, and property) taxes, increased quality of residential life, and longer residential tenure (Florida, 2002; Markusen & Schrock, 2008). Arts graduates also contribute through their community service—and these contributions are substantial. A national survey

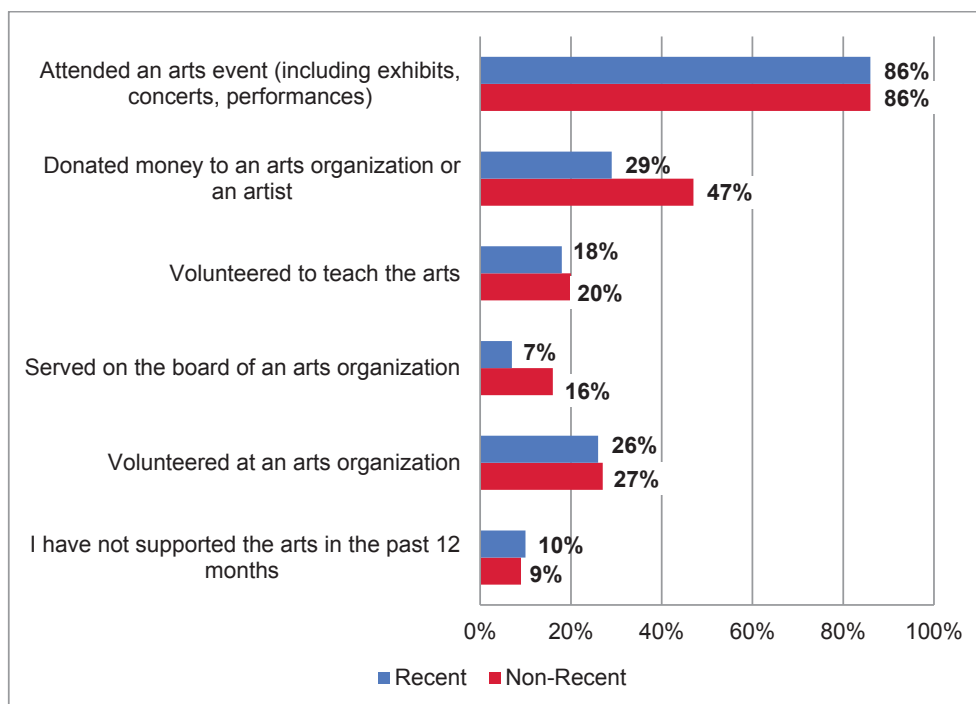
by the Independent Sector (2001) found that only 2% of Americans volunteer for any arts, cultural, or humanities organizations. Arts alumni, SNAAP results reveal, are nearly 14 times more likely than the population at large to volunteer within the arts. Furthermore, 27% of SNAAP’s respondents have volunteered at an arts organization within the past 12 months, and over 39% of our undergraduate and graduate arts alumni reported they participated frequently in community service while enrolled in school.

Although educational institutions place a stronger emphasis on civic engagement now than in previous decades, we might still expect that recent graduates are less inclined than older alumni to volunteer. They may not be settled in a community to which they feel an obligation, or they may not have money, skills, or other resources to give.

Across all recent graduates, we found a high level of community engagement (Figure 8).

- Only 10% reported that in the previous 12 months they had not supported the arts (by volunteering, donating money to an artist or arts organization, or attending an arts event)—a low percentage considering that recent alumni may have few resources to lend.
- About one fourth (26%) of recent graduates volunteered at an arts organization in the previous year, a number that puts them on par with less-recent graduates (27% of whom reported the same).
- Volunteering to teach the arts remains a dominant way in which arts graduates contribute to their communities, and 18% of recent graduates reported they had done so in the previous 12 months.
- Recent alumni were less engaged than were older cohorts in two kinds of community arts engagement: donating money to an arts organization or artist and serving on the board of an arts organization. While less than one third (29%) of recent alumni had donated money in

Figure 8: Community Engagement in the Arts, by Cohort



the past year, nearly half (47%) of non-recent alumni had done so. And while board service was the least common form of engagement among all alumni, recent alumni were less likely than prior graduates to have served in the past year (7% vs. 16%, respectively). If we think of financial support and board membership as forms of community engagement that require the most money and experience, it makes sense that arts graduates who are more advanced in their careers are more likely to give back to their communities in these ways.

The most popular form of community engagement was attendance at an arts event (including exhibits, concerts, and performances). Almost nine of ten recent alumni (86%) had gone to an arts event in the previous year. One alum wrote, “Even if you can’t afford to donate money, you support others by showing up to their events or volunteering your time and resources towards their event.”

Alumni were eager to mention the many forms their community arts engagement took: donating acting lessons, teaching in community centers, running an artist residency program, volunteering for local arts organizations including arts councils, serving

on nonprofit boards of directors, playing music for religious ceremonies, and donating to projects through crowd-funding sites like Kickstarter.

Recent graduates emphasized the role their training played in their commitment to community service. One wrote, “My arts training promoted a deep sense of civic responsibility and participation in community arts.” Many others found their commitment to community arts was fundamental to their personal and professional identities, describing themselves as “self-motivated” or as having a long-standing interest in community arts that was simply actualized or encouraged while they were in school. Other recent graduates articulated the instrumental value of community arts. For example, one alum said, “Art is the MOST important thing in the community. It teaches you to be empathetic to others and shows you that through expression you can help many people.” In addition, several alumni emphasized that art *itself* is a form of community engagement, and can have profound impact on civic life. One wrote,

Art can be political. And political expression allows for greater civic participation in community, and society. It redefines notions of citizenship and political agency in the

world. Art can also have less tangible universal benefits which can be enjoyed by all, literate and illiterate.

Training in the arts provides real, instrumental skills and abilities that alumni are able to harness for the good of the community. For example, one SNAAP respondent told us,

I often attend meetings about transportation/land use in my community and I can easily read plan or section graphics in ways that others (who do not have a design background) can't. I can help explain the potential impacts to other community members, and also challenge design proposals that I don't believe are good solutions. I've also been able to help a committee visualize what something will look like. I have volunteered my time to "render" a bikeway so people could better visualize/understand what the physical dimensions of a section would look/feel like.

However, some recent graduates did struggle to find the time to engage the arts in their communities. One SNAAP respondent wrote,

It makes me feel guilty for not doing more to support the arts community. But the truth is, I work six days a week and when I'm not working, it's Monday night. Sometimes I even work on Monday night. So I am rarely able to see shows or go to galleries, because I'm at work. I want to see more theatre, and I want to go to more shows. My training has taught me that being up on what is going on in the community is the best way to make your own work, so I feel like I'm withering on the vine here.

Another wrote, quite emphatically, "I CAN'T EVEN SUPPORT MYSELF. HOW CAN I SUPPORT THE ARTS?" On the other hand, some SNAAP respondents were using their volunteer activity as a means to become aware of, and involved in, potential future work. One such alum wrote,

I suppose my desire [to] volunteer at arts organizations stems from my desire to

succeed in my career using networking as a tool. It's paying off in a huge way. Last month I had a job interview where they asked me to fill out the new hire paperwork before they actually interviewed me. I was able to get that "interview" because someone I volunteer for on a regular basis recommended me.

5. Conclusion

At the moment they enter the labor force, graduates from college and university arts programs are seen as among the nation's most vulnerable. However, the 2014 SNAAP results point to some very different conclusions one might draw about their futures.

First, our arts institutions are doing an exemplary job providing students with unparalleled training in art techniques while also encouraging experimentation, creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving. Recent alumni who responded to the SNAAP survey articulated many ways that their arts training assists them in their work lives and contributes to their health and well-being, their relationships with others, their ability to collaborate and provide constructive criticism, and their ability to creatively solve problems. Arts graduates often see themselves as leaders at work and in their communities.



Second, recent arts alumni are utilizing internship programs to develop professional skills and social capital they find helpful in getting a job and being successful at it. In contrast to less recent arts alumni, more than half of recent SNAAP respondents participated in at least one internship during their undergraduate careers. In responding to the survey, many of these alumni wrote lengthy descriptions of the technical, professional, and personal skills they learned during these internships, even if they now work

outside of the arts. Internships provided many alumni with opportunities to explore whether a particular career path was worth pursuing and to develop relationships with potential employers. An astonishing number of older alumni used the SNAAP survey as an opportunity to ask their institutions to add, expand, or improve existing internship programs because of their perceived utility.

The expansion of internship programs and the balance of classical and progressive curricula may be two factors that contribute to arts graduates' success in finding employment and their high levels of satisfaction in those jobs. Although rising student loan debt does impact the educational and career choices of alumni who completed the SNAAP survey, respondents reported a readiness to continue their education as well as high levels of satisfaction with their work lives. These attitudes—what psychologists might call “self-efficacy” (Bandura, 1997)—characterize the responses of arts alumni to our survey. Perhaps it is this same feeling of self-efficacy that results in artists' overall job satisfaction. Arts graduates are among the happiest professionals in the US (Ivey & Kingsbury, 2008; Tepper et al., 2014). Only a small percentage of our survey respondents (16% of recent alumni) reported being “very dissatisfied” with their income. Arts alumni are often happy with the balance they have achieved between satisfaction at work and their salaries.

Fourth, although arts graduates are warned that they will struggle to find employment after graduation and that their employment may not make use of their skill set—exemplified by the proverbial actor/waiter—SNAAP data reveal a different story. Many graduates find work in the discipline of their training. On average, six of

every ten currently employed arts graduates described their current jobs as “relevant” or “very relevant” to their training (specifically, 64% of recent alumni and 69% of all alumni)—a greater percentage than graduates from journalism, accounting, or biology majors (National Science Foundation, 2010).

Finally, after graduation, arts alumni move across the country—to towns big and small—and, wherever they live, they significantly contribute to and invest in their communities. Along with supporting local arts activities through audience membership, arts alumni donate money and time to the arts; volunteer to teach arts classes, including at nonprofits; provide music at religious gatherings; and contribute time, talent, and skills to charity events—among many other activities. SNAAP results reveal that arts alumni are nearly 14 times more likely than the population at large to volunteer within the arts, and this engagement begins while they are still in school.

The SNAAP survey's window into the lives of recent arts graduates challenges the gloomy myths around the value of an arts degree—many of which rely on false or outdated statistics on arts graduates' levels of employment or income, or incorrectly assert that all graduates value the size of their paycheck more than applying their creativity, using their arts training at work, or meaningfully contributing to their communities. This annual report from SNAAP is a much-needed corrective—debunking those myths and revealing to policymakers, school administrators, employers, arts students, and their parents the exciting truth the myths obscure: Recent arts graduates are using their education and *making it work*.



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From the Director: Looking Forward

In 2014, SNAAP is taking a pause from the annual Fall survey administration to assess the work we do. Over the course of the year, we have engaged in a broad effort to elicit feedback and insights from our constituent institutions and stakeholders. In collaboration with market research consultant Surale Phillips, 800 people representing 759 educational institutions participated in an individual interview, focus group, or online survey, providing us valuable insights on SNAAP's strengths and potential areas for change. Many thanks to all who participated.

We are using the knowledge gained in this assessment to chart the course for SNAAP's future and to align our services most effectively with the needs of our core clients: educational institutions that give degrees in the arts.

Some of the primary take-aways from our market research include the desire for more flexibility and customization in the survey process, a leaner questionnaire, more easily digestible reports, the option to break out data by major field, and more accessibility and graphic vibrancy in data for audiences both within and outside the institution.

With these and other findings in hand, the SNAAP staff and National Advisory Board members are committed to creating a new SNAAP that better serves the needs of our participating institutions while continuing to provide meaningful national data about our industry.

Throughout 2014, SNAAP's services have been ongoing, including the delivery of over 100 Institutional Reports to our 2013 participating institutions, monthly DataBriefs, a new SnaapShot, online webinars, conference presentations, and this Annual Report.



In a new project with our sister survey, the National Survey of Student Engagement, we are developing a survey module that questions graduating seniors about their career aspirations and specific plans as well as the skills they learned as undergraduates. The resulting data will allow SNAAP schools to longitudinally analyze key elements about their arts majors, beginning with the second semester of their senior year. In addition, it will inform us about the differences between arts and non-arts students at NSSE schools. Thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts for supporting this important work.

Our national research activities, including this Annual Report, continue to be guided by Steven Tepper, now dean of the largest arts school in the country at a research university—the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University (ASU). In collaboration with ASU's new Center for the Study of Creative Work, we are planning a second *3 Million Stories* SNAAP conference, also supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, to take place in Phoenix in early 2016.

On behalf of the SNAAP staff and board, thank you for your interest in our work. We look forward to rolling out “SNAAP 2.0” over the coming year.

Sally Gaskill

*Director
Strategic National Arts Alumni Project
Indiana University*



Participating Institutions

2008-2013

Alabama

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University of Montevallo

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Purdue University*
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Morningside College
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Kansas State University
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 College for Creative Studies
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 Interlochen Arts Academy†
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 University of Minnesota–Twin Cities*
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 School of Music

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 University of North Carolina at Charlotte*
 University of North Carolina at Greensboro
 University of North Carolina School of the Arts
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North Dakota State University*
 University of North Dakota

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 Bluffton University
 Bowling Green State University
 Capital University Conservatory
 Case Western Reserve University*
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 Cleveland Institute of Music*
 Cleveland School of the Arts†
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 Pennsylvania College of Art and Design
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 University of the Arts*

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 University of Rhode Island

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University of Wyoming

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Alberta College of Art + Design
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OCAD University

* Data included in this report

† Arts high school

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